

Vol 63 | Issue 1 | 2015

MESSAGE

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INTERNATIONAL

MISSIONS ON THE FRONTLINE





He Meets Us In Our Suffering

Of all of the qualities I admire about Jesus, one of my favorites is that He was, as Isaiah chapter 53 describes, well acquainted with suffering.

Suffering is something that is inextricably linked with our human experience here on earth. Some endure more than others, but no one is immune — not even Jesus Himself. Suffering drives us to our knees, and we find ourselves crying out for relief, for rescue, for something larger than ourselves to intervene.

It is in those moments that God meets us.

In my own life, I have walked through much fear and uncertainty — becoming a father adds an extra dose of that — and God has come into my brokenness. He graciously met me on my knees.

Many of our missionaries are working in extremely difficult parts of the world — places where change is hard and slow, but the suffering is vast and overwhelming. It is challenging work, but they have the unique opportunity to be a force of grace and hope for those who feel forgotten and overlooked. They have front-row seats to see how God meets people in their suffering and uses their pain to open their hearts to His love.

From a hardened and impoverished barrio in Nicaragua to war-ravaged Eastern Ukraine, this issue's feature stories look at how God is using our missionaries and the church as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Please join me in praying that their work continues to open hearts — and I will also be praying that God shows you ways to come alongside them.

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WHO IS THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM (ABWE)?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. The objectives of ABWE are to establish indigenous Baptist churches and to train national pastors and leaders. About 1,000 missionaries serve with ABWE to advance God's work in 60 countries around the world by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith and serving the world with love.

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ON THE COVER:

A young man sits on the protest barricades on Grusheskovo Street in Kiev, Ukraine reading the Gospel of John. ©Karen Springs

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CZECH REPUBLIC

MOVING FORWARD

Two years ago, Steve Wendel, a missionary to the Czech Republic, was hanging Christmas lights on his newly rented home when a young couple approached his gate.

“Can we come inside and look around the house?” the young man asked.

“Excuse me?” Steve replied in Czech. “I don’t think I understand.”

“We want to look at the house. We are interested in bidding on it.”

They studied his face and could see that Steve didn’t comprehend why they were there. The couple shifted uncomfortably.

“You aren’t the owner, are you?” the young man realized out loud. “This house is going up for auction next week.”

Steve’s face fell. His family had just moved into the house. They were still settling in, and now, 10 days before Christmas, they discovered that their house was in foreclosure and being auctioned to pay their landlord’s debt. Their landlord had never uttered a word about it.

The Wendels had already been having a hard year of transitions, but overall their ministry was going well. Their evangelistic English classes in their rented

space were at maximum capacity, and Steve had begun praying that God would increase the reach of their ministry. They knew they could do more, but they simply didn’t have the space to do it in. Now they didn’t even have a home.

It was a very hard Christmas. Steve wanted to enjoy celebrating the birth of their Savior with his family, but all he could think about was finding a place to live — and the rental market in their town was meager. Many Czechs were putting off relocating until the new year, but the Wendels didn’t have a choice.

As a last resort, Steve went to check out a place that was barely in the final stages of construction. From the outside, it appeared to be some sort of commercial structure, but inside, they found it



“I would never have chosen the inconvenience of another move, but sometimes God moves us so we can grow.”



had an apartment large enough for their growing family. And downstairs, they discovered a multi-purpose space that was perfect for a ministry center.

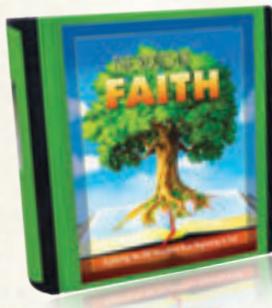
“I would never have chosen the inconvenience of another move, but sometimes God moves us so we can grow,” said Steve.

The Wendels moved into their new home in late January, and opened the Tree of Life Center in March 2013. Since then, they’ve been able to share the gospel with more than 100 people, and they’ve been able to train local believers in evangelistic ministry. In addition, the new center has allowed the Wendels to host numerous outreach events, including Bible studies, evangelistic English classes, and camps.

“So many ministries have been made possible by the new center,” said Steve. “Well, the center and lots of hard, but fruitful, work.” ■

We Couldn't Do What We Do Without You

THANK YOU to everyone who gave to the Goroka Baptist Bible College campus expansion project. Your generosity will give more eager believers the opportunity to be disciplined and help share Christ’s hope throughout Papua New Guinea.



Come Learn With Us & Grow Strong Roots of Faith

Our *Roots of Faith* Bible courses are a unique, interactive learning experience that will help you understand the Bible and trace God’s plan of salvation. In just a few fun days, you will learn the key components of the Old or New Testaments, look at the chronology of major Bible eras, and examine essential Bible events.

WHERE: ABWE’s Headquarters in New Cumberland, Pa.

WHEN: June 15-19, 2015: *The Roots of Faith — Old Testament*
June 22-26, 2015: *The Roots of Faith — New Testament*

To register or get more information, go to www.goodsoil.com/roots

CONNECTIONS

Ministry Snapshots from Around the World

PHILIPPINES

PEDALING TO CHURCH



After Typhoon Haiyan decimated Joel Marmita's hometown in the Philippines in 2013, Joel had difficulty finding work and struggled to provide for his wife and children. He hadn't been to church for a long time, but his hopelessness brought him to his knees and he found himself praying, "God, please do not forget us. I know you are trying to speak to us through the typhoon."

Joel returned to New Life Baptist Church of Palo, an ABWE church

plant established by a team of Filipino church planters led by missionaries Jim and Allene Latzko and Pastor Gling Aliposa. It was there that Joel quickly discovered God had not forgotten him.

God provided money, through a group of Filipino believers in the US, and Joel's pastor used the funds to purchase bicycle taxicabs, which are commonly used throughout the Philippines for short-distance transportation. Pastor Aliposa chose pedicabs because they only cost \$325 and require little maintenance, but could provide a steady income for typhoon victims.

Joel received one of the program's first 10 bikes, which were distributed to applicants on a rent-to-own basis. Recipients pay about a dollar a day for a year, and then they become full owners. Both church members and non-church members were able to apply, but part of the agreement

stated that they must attend church at least once a week. As a result, many drivers, including Joel, began bringing their entire families, and the church has grown.

"When we visited the Palo church, we were excited to find that it had almost doubled in size after the typhoon, partially due to the relationships built through the pedicab program," said Jim Latzko. "We decided to help expand this successful program into nine other churches whose communities were also damaged by Typhoon Haiyan."

Thanks to generous supporters, 36 more pedicabs have been distributed to typhoon victims, and the Latzkos are eager to see how the Lord will continue to use these bikes to transform lives. ■

LEARN MORE about ministry in the Philippines at www.jlatzko.com



CHILE

GRACE ON DISPLAY



Sometimes, showing grace when it is challenging is the best way to share the gospel. Chile missionary Stephanie Garcia was reminded of this at a recent women’s ministry retreat.

After months of preparing and praying for a smooth and meaningful retreat, Stephanie and her group arrived at their hotel and quickly discovered numerous maintenance problems. Rooms had not been vacated or cleaned, toilets were leaking, a shower curtain was missing, and to top it off, there was no hot water. It was a huge disappointment. The cost of the retreat had been a financial sacrifice for some of the women, but Stephanie had hoped it would prove worth the expense.

“Humanly speaking, it was frustrating to run into this after months of planning.

We were just hoping for everything to be perfect,” said Stephanie.

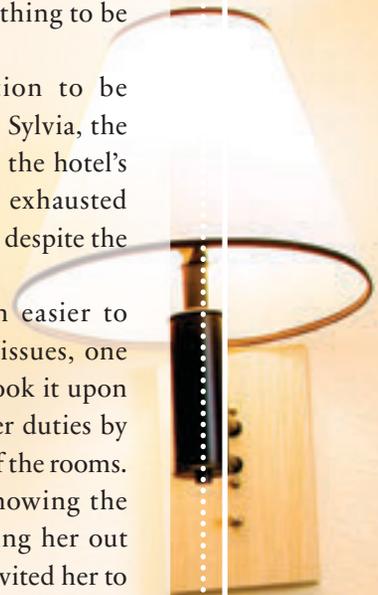
There was great temptation to be impatient and indignant with Sylvia, the woman in charge of doing all the hotel’s upkeep. She seemed harried, exhausted and somewhat short-tempered despite the group’s plight.

While it would have been easier to rebuke Sylvia for the hotel’s issues, one of the women at the retreat took it upon herself to assist Sylvia with her duties by helping her make beds in one of the rooms. Soon, other women began showing the same grace to Sylvia by helping her out when they could. They even invited her to participate in the retreat as she was able.

“These gestures of servanthood and kindness softened Sylvia’s heart,” said Stephanie.

Throughout the weekend, several women took time to personally share the message of salvation with her. On the last day of the retreat, their words and acts of grace sank in, and Sylvia put her trust in Jesus.

“How different the outcome might have been if we had responded in our flesh to those early inconveniences,” Stephanie said. “Instead, there was rejoicing in Heaven – and at our retreat!” ■



TOGO

FAITH IN THE FACE OF FEAR



Mensa was overjoyed when he learned his wife was pregnant with twins. But during delivery, his joy quickly turned into panic when his wife started bleeding to death and lost consciousness.

Mensa knew his wife needed medical attention that she couldn't get in their tiny village of Hekpe, Togo. He pleaded with his frightened neighbors to help take her to a nearby hospital, but they mocked his request. They told him that his dying wife could only be saved by the village witch doctor. But Mensa knew better.

With his wife slowly slipping away in his arms, he boldly proclaimed his belief in the one

true God. Mensa was a leader of an ABWE-planted church and he refused to allow his neighbors' ridicule to shake his faith. He told them that God was in control and his wife's life was in His hands, not the witch doctor's.

With prayers pouring from his lips, he rushed her to the hospital. Mercifully, Mensa's wife made a full recovery, and she and their new twins were back home within a week. To celebrate, the church held

a special service in the middle of the village that had just mocked Mensa's faith. Astoundingly, more than 100 people turned out to watch Mensa dedicate his new twins to the Lord.

"What a testimony it was to that village," said Mensa's mentor Jim Gerhart, an ABWE missionary working in Togo. "It was a wonderful proclamation of God's love and faithfulness." ■



There are four doctors for every 100,000 people in Togo.

To meet this overwhelming need, ABWE is opening a second hospital in Northern Togo in March 2015.

www.hospitalofhopemango.org



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LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



BOB & LOIS WALSH

CANDIDATE CLASS: 1975

COUNTRY SERVED IN: Brazil



Consider missions first.
Make steps in that direction.
If it is not God's will for your
life, He will close the door."

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MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS



1975
Married on May 31



1980
Arrived in São Paulo December 31



1975
Attended candidate class



1982-1985
Worked at church plant in Itaquera with
Norm Nicholas and Dave Taylor

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WALSHES

Q: How did God call you to missions?

A: When we were younger, we both met missionaries who presented at our churches and were invited to our homes. We also participated in missionary apprenticeship programs and camp ministry during our college years. Bob enjoyed the opportunity of leading several campers to faith in Christ, and Lois was deeply impacted by a chapel speaker in college who said, "Most people who are involved in full-time Christian service live in the United States. There is also a great need in other parts of the world to hear the gospel. Consider missions first. Make steps in that direction. If it is not God's will for your life, He will close the door."

Q: What is one of your favorite ministry memories?

A: After praying for the unsaved relatives of a faithful and dear friend named Edimar, we felt led to plan a missions trip to Northeast Brazil to reach them with the gospel. After a three-day journey, we finally reached Edimar's family who were resistant to us. They believed we had brainwashed Edimar or that

he had gone crazy, but we still did what God had led us there to do. We held a vacation Bible school for the children, showed gospel films, and faithfully preached every evening.

Slowly, their hearts softened and several placed their faith in Christ. It was refreshing to see how the gospel changed their perspective. At the beginning, they were reserved, but when it was time for us to leave, they wanted to know when we could come back to teach more of the Bible. We made two more trips to that area to teach them the Word.

Q: What is the best part of being a missionary?

A: It is always a great joy when someone puts their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, but we have also been blessed to counsel a group of believers who wanted to start a church. We had the amazing opportunity to watch the church grow and call a Brazilian pastor, and then we rejoiced as the church blossomed (without us) and planted its own church. These things bless a church planter's heart, because they continue to impact people and communities for generations.

Q: What advice would you give to new missionaries or those considering missions?

A: Make sure of your calling, so when trials or crisis arise, you won't be tempted to call it quits or to struggle with the issue of "Are we called?" Continue to serve, being confident of His leading, and seek God's direction for solutions to problems. And most importantly, don't forget to love the Lord your God. ■

**1988**

Established Faith Baptist Church in São Paulo

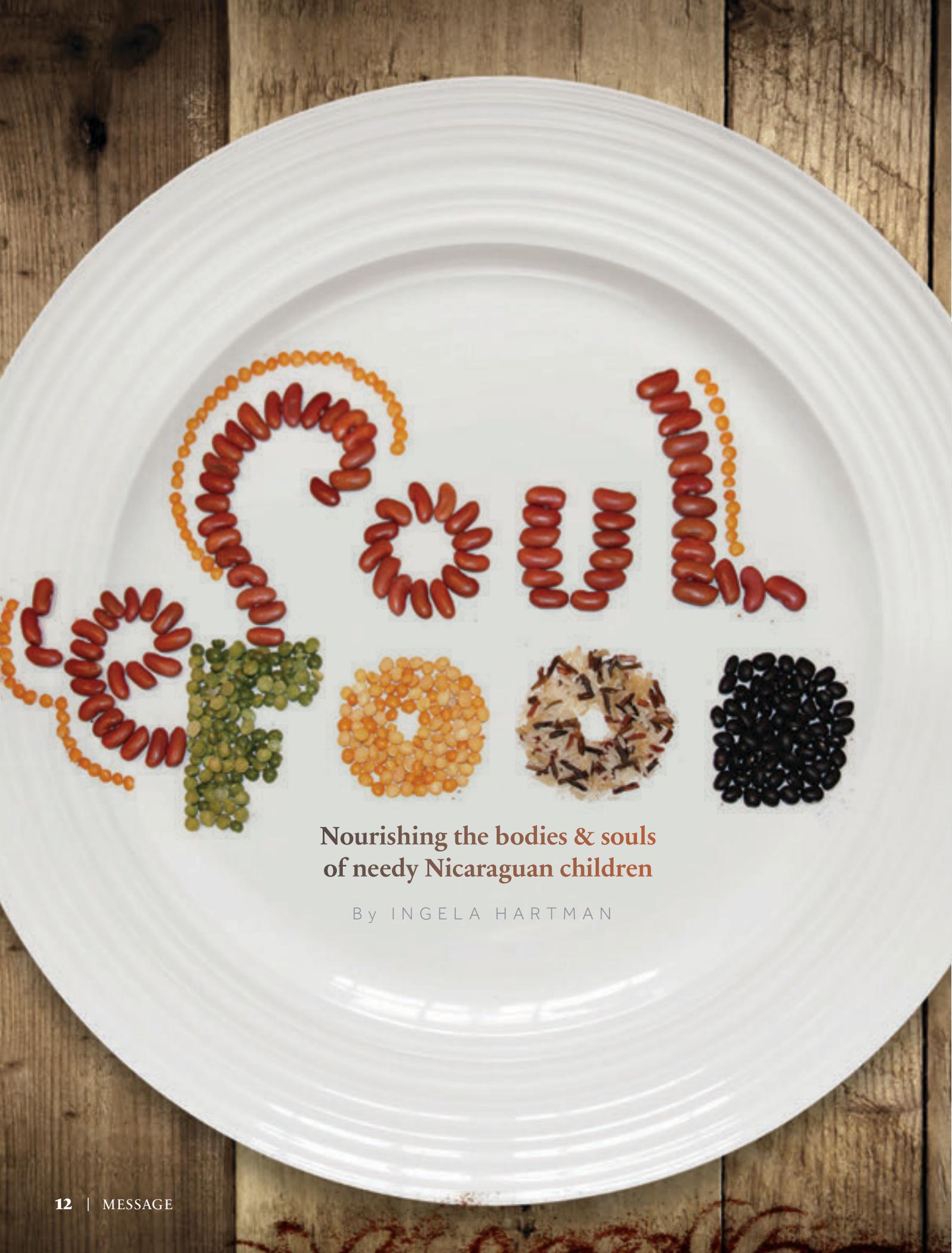
**2012**

Moved to Mogi Mirim to strengthen the Regular Baptist Church with Brazilian Pastor Paulo Leocadio



Started Victory Baptist Church in Indaiatuba

1998



**Nourishing the bodies & souls
of needy Nicaraguan children**

By INGELA HARTMAN



N

elly buzzes around the small kitchen as dozens of children cram onto benches crudely made from wooden pallets.

Some have been waiting for over an hour under the hot sun that slips through the shade tree. Each child tightly holds the bowl and cup they've brought in anticipation of whatever Nelly has in her large fire-blackened pot. It's not much, but for many of these children, this is the only meal they will get today.

Pastor Valeriano Manzanares started the Rayitos Children Feeding Center in Tangará three years ago, shortly after graduating from ABWE's Institute for Church Planters, which trains Nicaraguan leaders for ministry. Pastor Valeriano had been pastoring a church in the lower-middle class neighborhood of Oro Verde when God called him to Tangará. While Tangará is less than a mile from Oro Verde, the economic difference is staggering.

Located just west of Nicaragua's capital along the shore of a heavily polluted lake, Tangará is an impoverished suburb of the densely populated Sandino City. The city is home to a few factories, but it grapples with high unemployment rates, poor infrastructure, and extreme poverty. Historically, Sandino has been a place where the government sends people displaced by the many floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters that commonly hit Nicaragua. The most recent disaster, Hurricane Mitch in 1998, forced 12,000 new refugees to the city.

With Nicaragua being the poorest Spanish-speaking country in the world

and Sandino being one of its poorest cities, the Tangará barrio is at the bottom of the scale, containing the poorest city's poorest. Unemployment is widespread and many extended families live together to survive. God called Pastor Valeriano to minister to this community of rejected, displaced and destitute people, but despite the ever-present need, he was met with opposition. Gangs harassed him when he tried to establish a ministry near the center of the community. The gangs made it difficult and dangerous for him to be there, but Pastor Valeriano didn't give up. Instead, he asked God to give him a new church planting strategy and that prayer led him to a new vision.

"Upon seeing the hardness of the hearts of the adults, we decided to start making inroads with the community through a children's ministry. We felt that if we were going to change the situation in the neighborhood, we had to change the next generation," said Pastor Valeriano. "We shifted our focus to a feeding center for kids, and God began opening up the doors."



When Rayitos began, Nelly (above) cooked on a dilapidated outdoor stove. Now, thanks to generous donors, she has a new large kitchen where she prepares hot meals for the hungry children of the Tangará barrio each week.

Shining Light Into The Darkness

With the help of his ABWE mentors, Pastor Valeriano opened the Rayitos Children Feeding Center on the edge of the Tangará barrio. Rayitos means “little rays of light” and alludes to the center’s mission to bring little rays of light to this dark area. The program originally ran only on Saturdays, but was quickly expanded to include Thursdays and Fridays when Pastor Valeriano realized it was difficult to affect nutrition unless the children received a complete meal several times a week.

Initially, Rayitos operated out of the house of one of Pastor Valeriano’s church members who lived in Tangará, and Nelly, a loving church woman in her 50s, started doing all of the cooking on an outdoor stove behind the house. The kids met on benches on the front patio, and a small overhang and a tiny tree provided the only shade and protection from rain. There was not much space for the kids, and as word spread, the number of kids coming through Nelly’s line grew beyond the home’s capacity.



“All of the land is dirt. There is no grass. The kids sit on benches made from old pallets. But to us it is *beautiful*.”

Pastor Valeriano, along with ABWE missionaries Mark and Jen Holsinger, began to seek a more permanent location, and in May 2014, God provided the funding for the ministry to purchase its own property. It was still small, but it included a little cement-block house, shanty kitchen, latrine, and three large trees that provided sufficient shade for all the kids. Nelly did the best she could in the makeshift kitchen, until Pastor Valeriano raised enough donations from churches and supporters to build a new kitchen and bathrooms. Now, Rayitos has a large kitchen with a new roof to keep out the rain and sun, cement and tile counters for chopping and preparing food, a refrigerator and cabinet to store food and supplies, and a large gas stove for Nelly to cook on.

“We are so thankful for this blessing,” said Mark Holsinger. “To visitors the property probably still looks bare and in need of a lot of work. The front wall and gate are made of rusted corrugated tin. The small house is dingy and old and full of supplies, building materials, and a hammock for the caretaker. All of the land is dirt. There is no grass. The kids sit on benches made from old pallets. But to us it is beautiful.”

Precious Manna

Every day Rayitos is open, Nelly can be found cooking over the hot stove and lugging huge pots for the large portions. Attendance fluctuates throughout the year, but on average, Nelly dishes out food for more than 120 kids varying in age from babies to teenagers. They normally receive a drink, rice with soy, pureed potatoes or pasta, and part of a tortilla, which serves as a spoon. Some eat on the benches, but many take it home to share with other family members.



The children bring their own bowl and cup from home, and Rayitos gives them rice with soy, pureed potatoes or pasta, part of a tortilla, and a drink. Many take their small portion of precious food home to share with their family.



Nicaragua is classified by the World Bank as the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and 76 percent of its population lives on less than \$2 a day.

According to the National Survey of Demographic and Health, 23 percent of children under the age of five suffer from chronic undernutrition in Nicaragua.

“Food is precious in Tangará,” said Mark. “We are amazed at how little food is spilled even by the little ones.”

Getting the bare necessities of life is a struggle for most families in the barrio, and they often don’t have enough to eat. Most eat meager portions of rice and beans for almost every meal, and vegetables and meat are a rare luxury.

“We hosted a day camp where we took a group of children to the ABWE ministry center. For lunch, we served fried chicken and some of the younger kids did not know what it was,” said Mark. “Most of the kids ate little of the chicken and wrapped it up in napkins to take back to their family. They even wrapped up the bones to take home.”

Daily Bread

While the center is nourishing these children’s bodies, it is also nourishing their souls. Before lunch is served, Pastor Valeriano and the Holsingers lead the children in a time of worship, prayer and Bible study. They begin each session with prayer, and they teach the children how to pray by saying the prayer one line at a time and having the kids repeat after them. Then,



they have a time of song and worship, followed by a Bible lesson. Many of the kids need help finding the books of the Bible and the verses, but they are learning. Currently, the Bibles are kept at the center, but Pastor Valeriano hopes to develop a system where children can earn their own Bible through verse memorization and faithful attendance.

“At first, the kids come for the food. Then, they come because of relationships they form with the teachers and other workers. We hope, as they grow, they will also come because of their love for God, His Word, and worship of Him,” said Mark. “This is our hope.”

Before the children are released to go through the food line, Pastor Valeriano does something that some might find odd in a neighborhood where the families have so little

“Food is precious
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“We have already
seen God *multiply*
this ministry
and bless us in
so many ways.”

— he passes around a plastic bag for the children to give an offering. He does this every time they feed the children to teach them the importance of giving — no matter how little they have. Some give nothing and some give a córdoba (worth about four cents), but Pastor Valeriano hopes to show them how God takes the little that they give and multiplies it.

“We have already seen God multiply this ministry and bless us in so many ways. We have seen a change in the attitude of the children. We have seen an acceptance of the Word of God. We have seen kids memorizing verses. We have seen the attendance increasing. And we have seen kids accepting Christ as their savior,” said Pastor Valeriano. “And recently, we saw the first adult come to Christ.”



Leticia was a young mother in her early twenties who started coming to the feeding center with her little baby and her younger brother. Each week, she watched the Rayitos staff care for her child and the Tangará children who were starving to be loved and nurtured. She heard Pastor Valeriano and other teachers talk about a loving God who sent His only Son to die for her. While her baby could not understand the lessons, Leticia could, and timidly, she began participating. She even memorized the Bible verses. Then one day, as the children were receiving their food after the lesson, she sat down with Pastor Valeriano and asked him to help her accept Christ. Leticia is now attending the adult Sunday school class, and the beginning of what Pastor Valeriano and the Holsingers hope will grow into a new church plant.

“We are thankful to all the people who have helped our ministry because of their love for Christ. God has provided the money necessary for this ministry and now we are praying to expand its reach so we can impact more hearts in Tangará,” said Pastor Valeriano. —●

SUPPORT the Rayitos Children Feeding Center and ministry at www.abwe.org/rayitos





An elderly Ukrainian woman and her daughter-in-law experience heartbreak when they discover their home has been destroyed by the war and they lack the means to repair it.



MISSIONS ON THE FRONTLINE

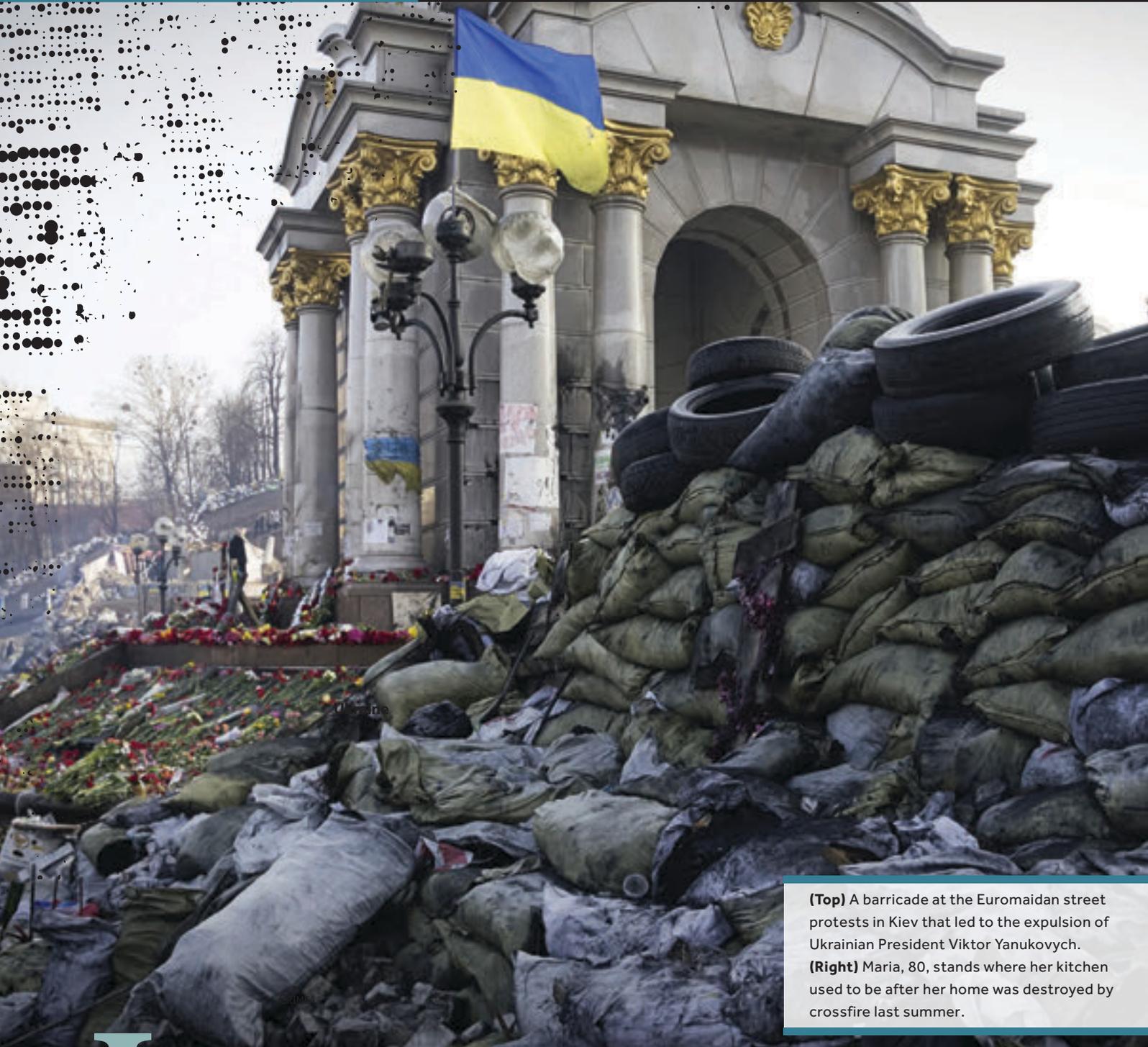
By INGELA HARTMAN

GUNFIRE & BOMBS SOUND IN THE DISTANCE. BROKEN

**WIRES HANG FROM POLES &
CRUMBLING BUILDINGS FEEBLY
STAND. THE CITY IS WEARY
— JUST LIKE ITS RESIDENTS.**

“The atmosphere here is permeated with anguish and depression. It is like visiting a cemetery,” said a pastor of a partner church in the conflict zone of Eastern Ukraine.

Just months earlier, the city of Donetsk was bubbling with life. People had good paying jobs and work was plentiful in the coal mines and factories. Children laughed and played in the parks under trees dripping with apricot blossoms. Today, that life has all but been extinguished in Donetsk, and throughout Eastern Ukraine, as the conflict between pro-Russian forces and Ukraine has turned innocent citizens into victims of war. ▶



(Top) A barricade at the Euromaidan street protests in Kiev that led to the expulsion of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

(Right) Maria, 80, stands where her kitchen used to be after her home was destroyed by crossfire last summer.

IT ALL BEGAN last February when massive street protests broke out in Ukraine and a violent revolution led to the expulsion of Ukraine's Russian-leaning President Viktor Yanukovich. New elections were held, and the new government moved the country in a decidedly Western direction and away from Russia's influence. This

shift sparked a struggle between pro-Russian forces, and those wanting to align with the European Union and NATO.

In March, Russia stepped in and annexed Ukraine's southern Crimea region. They also began supplying support to pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian

government forces and pro-Russian rebels have been battling for control of this region ever since. According to UN estimates, more than 1 million Ukrainians have fled the region and nearly 6,000 people have lost their lives, but the numbers are likely much higher and continue to grow as the war rages on.

Despite the shocking amount of people affected, the numbers fail to communicate the full extent of the humanitarian crisis gripping Eastern Ukraine. In a matter of a few months, cities in the conflict zone have gone from bustling societies with robust economies and lively populations to burned-out shells that only faintly resemble their former selves. Many that remain in Eastern Ukraine have been left without access to money, electricity, water, food, and medicines. Many were not physically able to flee or had nowhere to go, and others were afraid to leave their homes to the looters who openly pilfer houses in this lawless republic.

Despite these desperate conditions, many believers have chosen to stay. They are continuing to serve and bring the hope of Christ to those in need.

"It would be easy to assume that the atmosphere of disappointment, anxiety, and despair would prohibit the church from fulfilling its calling," said Caleb Suko, ABWE missionary ministering in Southern Ukraine. "But hardship doesn't prevent the church from doing its mission; it enables it. God designed the church with these kinds of situations in mind. Jesus gave the church a foundation that cannot and will not bend or break, no matter how tragic or hopeless the situation."

To help the church meet the growing need in Ukraine, ABWE missionaries, in partnership with local church leaders, established the

Ukraine Crisis Fund in May 2014. The fund aims to strengthen the church's ability to share Jesus' love by ministering to people's physical needs during these uncertain times. In less than a year, they have collected more than \$85,000 from generous donors and judiciously distributed \$56,000 through churches, church leaders, and Christian organizations.



©UNHCR/I. Zimova/July 2014

“Hardship doesn’t prevent the church from doing its mission; it enables it.”

Every week, ABWE's Ukraine Crisis Fund receives as many as 20 letters from Ukrainian pastors and churches. The needs are overwhelming, but the fund leaders allocate the limited money based on the request's alignment with the fund's goal to aid those impacted by the current crisis, connect with affiliated local churches, and have an evangelistic component.

In the past 10 months, the fund has helped thousands of victims of

the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It has helped provide supplies and shelter for refugees and orphans who have fled to other parts of Ukraine. It has also funneled money into churches in the conflict zone to help feed and provide for the elderly, disabled, and those unable to flee.

Missionaries and partner churches are helping get aid to those who need it most, and people are responding. Recently, two young men, whose homes were destroyed by the war, met an ABWE ministry partner at an Eastern Ukrainian hostel for war refugees. The two boys had seen him bringing supplies and grew curious. They approached him in the hallway as he was delivering more items to the residents.

"We see that you are bringing everyone food and clothing. Why are you doing this?" one of the boys asked.

"To let you know how much God loves you," he replied. The next week the two young men came to church for the first time in their lives. They were not alone. Hundreds of people who had never stepped foot in a church before are finding refuge and hope in the middle of the tragedy that surrounds them.

Handing Out Hope

No one knows the tragedies of this war better than Alla. She lived in a three-room house in Eastern Ukraine with her two children, Dima and Valya, and her mother. Alla worked hard to make ends meet and managed with the help



With help from ABWE's Ukraine Crisis Fund, partner churches in Eastern Ukraine have been able to provide food, shelter, and basic necessities to their struggling neighbors.

of her mother's pension. When the conflict erupted, Alla heard about the battles being fought nearby, but she didn't have the means to leave. She never imagined that the war would destroy her whole world.

On an ordinary August afternoon, Alla had gone to buy school supplies in preparation for the end of her kids' summer break. Alla's mother was watching seven-year-old Valya and 10-year-old Dima. They were playing and enjoying their last days of summer vacation when a loud whistling sound suddenly filled their ears. They spotted a rocket coming towards them and watched as it slammed into their house. It made a deafening explosion and then everything went black.

Alla rushed toward the wailing sirens and found her house burned to the ground and her family severely wounded. In a split second, Dima and his grandmother had each lost a leg, and all three had multiple wounds from shrapnel fragments. They were rushed to an overwhelmed hospital that was already flooded with victims and short on supplies and staff. Dima, Valya, and their grandmother only received basic first aid, but were not given much-needed surgical care.

With no home to return to, Alla and her family were forced to move into a cramped two-room apartment that shared a kitchen with their neighbors. Alla lost her job, as did most of her neighbors in the town brutalized and stripped bare by war, and relied-upon monthly pensions were cut off to residents in the conflict zone. Alla's resources were

bleeding away, and she wondered how she was going to feed her family. Then, there was a knock at her door. It was a lady from a nearby church who asked if they needed any help. Alla wept with relief and soon people from the church began bringing groceries purchased with money from ABWE's Ukraine Crisis Fund. The church shared Christ's love and hope, and now Dima dreams of the day he can run again in heaven.

More Than a Building

Like Alla's town, the city of Antratsit is facing similar hard times. It sits in the heart of the conflict zone, and the Russian-backed separatists who took control of the city have banned citizens from driving — even riding a bike around town is prohibited. Only the separatist fighters are able to freely navigate the city, often in vehicles they have procured from defenseless citizens. Mobile phones don't work and home phones only work within the city. Stores no longer have food on their shelves, pharmacies have been emptied of their medications, electricity is on only during specific hours of the day, and all income and pensions have been cut off.

The situation in Antratsit is dire for the poor and the wealthy, but 20 members at an ABWE-partner church decided not to flee the worn-torn city so they could serve the suffering people of their community. They turned their church basement into a bomb shelter where up to 70 people would come nightly for safety, and they began caring for and housing 20 disabled people who





could not quickly make it to bomb shelters when shelling occurred. Occasionally, the church was also able to secure a shipment of food that they shared with their hungry neighbors. As many as 700 people would line up outside the doors of the church just to get some bread and potatoes.

Despite the church's efforts to aid and shelter victims of the conflict, the war continued to press in, and last September, Russian-backed separatists armed with machine guns stormed through the doors of the church. They demanded that everyone vacate the premises immediately and hand over the building's ownership documents.

"Why is our church being taken from us?" asked a church leader.

"Because your denomination supported the Ukrainian army," said one of the soldiers.

Despite being falsely accused and punished, they left secure in the knowledge that the church is not a building. The church members continued their ministry by taking the 20 disabled individuals they had been caring for at the church into their own homes. The war may have taken their building, but it could not take away their faith and their ability to serve. They did what they could for their helpless neighbors, even as their own food supplies grew short. They prayed and trusted that God would provide, and He did.

Just two months after it was forcefully seized, the church building was unexpectedly returned. The church's pastor received the ownership documents with a letter stating that military forces would no longer touch their place of worship. With some support from the Crisis Fund, the church is once again using

the building to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their broken community.

"Getting our church building back was a miracle and an answer to prayer, but things are still hard and getting harder," said a leader at the Anratsit church. "We are seeing a new wave of people who want to leave our region and a large number of people who are hungry. Please pray and continue to pray for our area."

Seeking Refuge

While people remain in the conflict zone, many of the more than 1 million refugees, including Daniel German, have sought safety in other parts of Ukraine.

Daniel moved to the Donetsk province about 15 years ago to attend Donetsk Christian University. After graduating, he worked at the university for a few years before

opening his own flower greenhouse. He was a strong leader at his church, and when the war broke out, he sent his wife and four children to live with his parents in Southern Ukraine, while he stayed to help his church and to harvest as many flowers as possible before joining his family.

Daniel left when he could hear the bombs and artillery from his house. He only took what he could carry, leaving his home, all his earthly possessions, and his roses behind.

“The Bible says we are pilgrims, strangers on this earth. But it is difficult to pull up our roots. It was hard to put my whole life into one suitcase,” said Daniel. “While it was hard to leave, I felt lighter when I got here.”

At first, Daniel’s family of six lived with his parents in their small three-room house near the city of Odessa. It was challenging, but God gave him a good-paying construction job, and eventually, they had enough money and security to start looking for an apartment to rent. They prayed for help and were connected with a new church plant nearby that had purchased a property with an old church building and a small house. The church was looking for someone to live in the house and take care of the property. To Daniel and his family’s delight, they discovered the house was larger than their lost home in Donetsk and there was even a small greenhouse that Daniel could use.

“When I left, I cried over losing much, but I realized that God has

my life in His hands,” said Daniel. “The Hebrew word for ‘blessing’ is a complex word that has two meanings: gift and fall to your knees. God gives us gifts to drive us to our knees. When I lost my home and greenhouse, that was a blessing because it drove me to my knees.”



©UNHCR/I. Zimova/July 2014

“The Bible says we are pilgrims, strangers on this earth. But it is difficult to pull up our roots. It was hard to put my whole life into one suitcase.”

Finding Refuge

Churches and ABWE missionaries throughout Ukraine have been working to give shelter, support, and hope to refugees like Daniel. The Ukraine Crisis Fund has supplied food, beds, blankets, shoes, and winter clothing to refugees — many who fled the war with just the summer clothes on their backs.

“Refugees feel safe, but worthless. It is difficult to find permanent work that pays a decent salary in Ukraine. It is also hard to find a place to live. They don’t know what to buy here as they left everything behind, and they don’t know how long they will be here,” said Daniel.

Over the last six months, an ABWE-supported church plant in Odessa has housed and helped more than 50 refugees, and recently, three of them walked into a church leaders’ meeting carrying cake and tea. They said it was to thank the church for letting them stay and the loving way the church welcomed and helped them. Then, one of the refugees said something that shocked the church leaders.

“I’m a Muslim, but I have never seen so much love and kindness before,” she said. “We’re going to be moving out of the church facility because we have found an apartment nearby. But even though we’re moving out, we are not going to leave the church.”

Without A Home

Of the more than one million refugees who have fled Eastern Ukraine, UNICEF estimates that at least 134,000 are children, including several hundred orphans. There were approximately 10,000 orphans in Eastern Ukraine when the fighting began, but many have fled to other parts of Ukraine. These refugee orphans are pouring into overcrowded orphanages with



Orphan refugees who fled to the Odessa province have been given school supplies, clothing, and basic hygiene products through support from ABWE's Ukraine Crisis Fund. This aid has made the orphanages more receptive to church involvement and helped establish Bible clubs for the children.



“When things fall apart, we realize that every minute is God’s gift.”

nothing but a small bag of personal belongings and a few summer clothes. They thought they would be gone for just a month, but the war continues on.

“I didn’t know what it would be like here, so leaving was really tough. But here it is safer,” said a refugee orphan.

One orphanage in the Odessa province has taken in 62 orphan refugees, in addition to the 210 kids it already cared for. Despite the 30 percent increase in children, the orphanage was given no additional government funding. The workers did their best with their limited resources. They pulled beds out of storage, scrambled for bedding, and thinned down the soup. The orphanage was forced to use unheated rooms and rooms with missing windows.

It was a temporary solution that sufficed during the summer months, but as the weather turned cold, their needs grew dire. ABWE’s Ukraine Crisis Fund and its national partners intervened. They bought windows for a dorm room that houses 15 kids and for a dining room that was expanded to feed the new children. They also provided school supplies, clothing, food, basic hygiene products, and winter boots and coats to help the refugee children stay warm during Ukraine’s harsh winter.

The aid from the Crisis Fund and local churches has opened doors and made the orphanages very receptive to church involvement. It has made it possible to share the gospel with the children and workers, and at the Odessa orphanage, a local pastor is hosting a biweekly Bible club for all the kids.

“That’s our biggest priority — helping them have a chance to hear the gospel and know who Jesus is,” said Miriam Wheeler, ABWE missionary and coordinator of the Ukraine Crisis Fund. “Whatever expression we give of Jesus’ love, we want them to know that it all comes from our love of God.”

The Crisis Fund is now helping to support and meet needs at five orphanages in the Odessa province that have taken in refugee children.

“At first it was really difficult to get used to a new place, but after a while I wanted to study, and even felt safe to dream about the future,” said one orphan refugee.

The Ukrainian people are facing hard times, caught in a war that has no end in sight. Fear and hunger are daily battles within the conflict zone, but the effects of war are uncontrollable. Prices are rising throughout the country, while wages are not, and many are worried the fighting will spread. The future is uncertain, but in these seemingly hopeless times, missionaries and national believers have been given a unique opportunity to share the source of their hope. Perhaps refugee Daniel German said it best, “When things are normal, we expect safety, bread, and salaries to always be there tomorrow. When things fall apart, we realize that every minute is God’s gift.” 🕒

SUPPORT the
Ukraine Crisis Fund at
www.abwe.org/ukraine

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VISUALS

Ukraine Conflict Overview

February 21, 2014:

A violent revolution leads to the expulsion of Ukraine's Russian-leaning president



February 23, 2014:

Ukraine's parliament assigns presidential powers to a new Western-leaning leader, sparking a conflict with pro-Russian forces



March 2014:

Russia annexes Ukraine's southern Crimea region and begins supplying support for pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine



March 2014 - Present:

The Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian rebels fight for control of Eastern Ukraine

Orphans

“Before the war, we always had enough food and rest, with nice places nearby for a walk.”

“The first time I heard artillery fire, I got really scared.”

“We never thought that this could happen here.”

- Orphan refugees

Ukraine has

96,000+ orphans and **10,000** are in the conflict zone

Refugees

90% of our congregation has fled to a different city. Our church is like it says in the book of James' scattered among the nations.”

- Pastor of a partner Eastern Ukrainian church

5.2 million Ukrainians

are affected by the crisis, including **1.7 million** children

1 million+ have fled the conflict zone

Of those displaced, **135,000** are children

Life in the War Zone

“For more than 50 days, there has been no water, no electricity, no gas, no stores & no food, no pharmacies & no medication.

Our wonderful church building has been burnt to the ground. This is only a small part of what's happening — it's a drop of water in a sea of suffering that is storming our area.”

- A leader of an ABWE-partner church in the conflict zone



5,000+ people have been **reported dead**, but many believe the actual number is significantly higher



12,000+ have been **wounded**



800+ people have been **abducted or detained** by armed groups

Source: United Nations, as of February 12, 2015

\$90,000+
Raised

How ABWE is Helping

In May 2014, ABWE missionaries working in Ukraine, in partnership with local church leaders, established the **Ukraine Crisis Fund** to strengthen the church's ability to share Jesus' love by ministering to people's physical needs during these uncertain times.

\$56,000
Distributed to date

\$6,315
to five orphanages
in the Odessa province
that took in refugees

150 refugee orphans have received:



personal hygiene items, like soap & toothpaste



beds, pillows, sheets, blankets, & towels



winter clothes & boots



Funds were also used to expand and repair orphanages that accepted refugee orphans

\$17,550
to 8+ churches
that are actively helping refugees in Western Ukraine



“Imagine getting on a bus with a little bag, no bigger than a grocery bag, and thinking you’re going to be gone for a week or two, and now it’s six months later and you still can’t go home. No one dreamed it would go on this long.”

– Miriam Wheeler, Ukraine Crisis Fund Administrator & ABWE missionary in Western Ukraine

\$27,400
to 50+ churches
in the conflict zone to help them care for the wounded, needy, elderly, and disabled who are unable to flee

“We prepare lunch every day for the poor, the invalids, and the elderly. We buy and distribute bread to the hungry. We visit them at home, and pray that they will see God’s love in us.”

– A partner pastor in the war zone who received funding from ABWE’s Ukraine Crisis Fund

Churches in the conflict zone have used funds to:

Feed tens of thousands of people



Distribute bread & groceries



Repair homes damaged by the war



Buy medicines & winter clothes



Provide wood, coal, & heating supplies



\$1,776
to train church leaders to respond to this crisis and collaborate on aid strategy

\$3,050
to hospital and military family evangelism



Growing up Different

BY ABBY FARRAN

12-year-old ABWE Missionary Kid Expert

I have been a missionary kid in South Africa for eight years — more than two-thirds of my life. I've grown up living in one country and saying that I belonged to another. There are lots of cool things about being a missionary kid (MK), but every MK knows that there are also things that are not so cool. Over time, I have learned how to get over the stuff that bothers me and make sure I don't take the cool things for granted.

Some MKs struggle with the fact that they never belonged to a certain country or that they look or talk different than the

majority of their neighbors. My sister and I are the only white girls in our youth group, and every time I talk to someone, they ask me if I am American — every single time. Some MKs feel that they can't fit in with their friends because they are different. I struggled with that for years, but trying to forget that I was different just didn't do any good. So, I had to acknowledge that I was not African, and when I got over how I felt about being different, I realized that my friends didn't care. I felt so dumb for spending so many years fretting and inwardly complaining about how different

I was, only to realize that my friends like me how I am. They like me even if I talk with an accent or if I have no idea what is going on with the rugby teams.

One of the worst things an MK can do is spend their whole time on the mission field trying to cover up their true identity because sometimes it is fun to be different. For example, being an American gives people a chance to find out what Americans and America are like. I have answered lots of questions about America and sometimes they are absolutely crazy, like “Do you see movie stars all the time?” “Does everyone live in mansions?” and my personal favorite, “Does America have trees?”

During my time in South Africa, I started developing my own nationality. I’m American — there is no doubt about that — but I have started to fit in with my South African friends as the African/American. I’m different and it is ok. I have cool stories to tell in America, and I have cool stories to tell here in South Africa.

It took me a long time to realize that I’m not an oddball that doesn’t fit in; I’m a girl that has tons of different stories and experiences to share. There are lots of neat things that my family can do here that we would never be able to do if we lived in the States. For example, we live close to a game park, and almost every month, we get to see lions, giraffes, hyenas, wild dogs, and lots of other animals. And the park isn’t the only place to see amazing animals. A nearby town has a leopard that lives right on the edge of town, and in another town, residents have reported

hippos in their backyard. MKs all over the world have loads of stories that would fascinate other people for hours, but it’s easy to forget that we have experiences and opportunities that most kids never get.

Being an MK also forces you to develop lots of social skills because we have to interact with a lot of people, whether they are kids in an orphanage, pastors in a rural area, or sick women in a hospital. While it can sometimes feel like being in a torture chamber, those moments teach us how to interact with all different kinds of people. Those moments also teach us how to be encouraging and helpful and how to honor God through all our actions and words in any circumstance.

There is no doubt that being an MK comes with many hard things, like relocating to a different country and leaving family behind, but in each of those things, I’ve had the opportunity to see God work in wonderful ways. My dad was just asked to be the Regional Administrator for East Africa, which means that we have to move to Tanzania. I was very upset and am still going through the process of giving pets away, saying goodbye to friends, and packing our house. Most people would freak out at just the idea of moving to a different country – let alone packing up without knowing what house, car, or church we will have. But that is what we come to embrace as MKs. People say to trust Jesus and see where He leads you and what He gives you. And no one understands that better than MKs. ♥

“I’ve grown up living in one country and saying that I belonged to another.”



©thinkstockphotos.com

3 Ways Living in Wartime Changes Your Perspective

According to **CALEB SUKO**

ABWE Missionary to Ukraine

Living in a country that's at war not only changes the way you think, it changes your perspective on everything. It infiltrates your daily life like a bad rash. The harder you try to pretend it's not there the more you become aware of its presence.

1 Priorities change

It's amazing how quickly what seemed like a vital aspect of your life becomes meaningless. Losing that extra 10 pounds or searching for the latest fall fashions will always take a back seat when your life and priorities are in balance.

In a way, this change in priorities is good; it wakes up the soul. It boils life down to the basics. I believe this pruning of priorities is useful for the church, and I've seen it in Eastern Ukraine churches. They are no longer as concerned with music styles and sermons that run overtime. Instead, they're consumed with the ministry of providing physical and spiritual aid to those in need.

War produces clarity of God's calling. It's a beautiful agony that produces an ache in the soul that says, "Lord, how can I serve?"

2 Long-term plans are thrown out the window

Western society is a culture of big plans. From the time I was a young man, I have been taught the importance of planning ahead. I've sat down in many meetings with different groups as we've hammered out plans for the entire year or even the next five years.

I'm not against planning but one thing I'm starting to recognize is that all planning is based on one

primary assumption: everything will remain the same.

In wartime, we learn that everything is conditional and temporary, especially peace.

3 The idea of peace takes on new meaning

Peace is one of those words that everyone can agree upon. Talk to anyone in Ukraine or listen to any world leader, and they will tell you that more than anything they want peace.

But if everyone wants peace, why don't we have it?

Wanting peace is not enough. Peace must be earned. Peace requires hard work and sacrifice.

But that's not the real problem. Some people are willing to work for it, but unfortunately, everyone wants peace on their own terms. And as long as neither side is willing to submit, there will be no peace.

I pray that God gives wisdom to the leadership of Ukraine so that there will be peace in Eastern Ukraine, but I know that this peace will only be temporary because only Jesus can provide permanent peace. He's already doing this in the hearts and souls of people every day. I pray for the day when He finally takes the government upon His shoulders and give us complete eternal peace. ■



A Leap of *Faith*

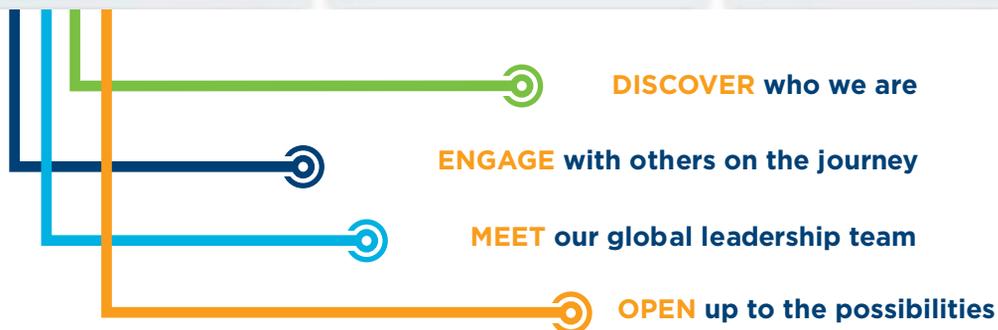
Friends came from all over Japan to attend our daughter Danielle's wedding to Takuya Kajihara, a young man who was saved at one of our church plants. It was a blessing to gather with the people whom we have impacted and who have also impacted our family during our 25 years of ministry in this dynamic and beautiful country. The next morning our son Billy and a few of our close family friends went to a nearby beach. Together, they celebrated the joy of God's faithfulness and snapped this photo."



Bill and Becky Petite are ABWE missionaries that have been church planting in Japan since 1990. They, along with their two children and their spouses, are continuing the ministry legacy that Becky's parents, long-time ABWE missionaries to Japan, began in 1955.



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